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# The Influence of Literature.

AN ORATION,

By Hon. JOHN W. A. SANFORD, LL.D.,

OF MONTGOMERY, ALA.

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THE  
INFLUENCE OF LITERATURE:

AN ORATION

Delivered Before the Erosophic and Philomathic Societies

OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA,

AT

THE ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT,

July 1st, 1878,

By HON. JOHN W. A. SANFORD, LL.D.,

OF MONTGOMERY.



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TUSKALOOSA, ALA., Nov. 10th, 1878.

Dear Sir :

The Literary Societies of the University, appreciating the eloquence and high literary character of the anniversary address delivered by you during the last Commencement, and desiring to preserve it in some more tangible form than the frail record of their memories, have appointed the undersigned a committee to solicit from you a copy of that address for publication. Your compliance with this request will be very gratifying to the members of these Societies. Hoping for an early and favorable response, we are,

Very respectfully, yours,

TENNENT LOMAX,

R. E. SPRAGGINS,

JAS. H. LITTLE,

*Committee from Erosophic Society.*

CHAPPELL CORY,

CHAS. R. MCCALL,

*Committee from Philomathic Society.*

HON. JNO. W. A. SANFORD,  
Montgomery, Ala.

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MONTGOMERY, ALA., Nov. 16th, 1878.

Gentlemen :

I have received your note of the 10th inst., requesting for publication a copy of the address I had the honor to deliver before the Literary Societies of the University of Alabama on the first day of last July.

Thanking you for the kind manner in which you have made known the wishes of the Societies; and regretting that the address was not more worthy of the occasion, I transmit to you a copy.

Yours, very respectfully,

JOHN W. A. SANFORD.

Messrs. TENNENT LOMAX, R. E. SPRAGGINS, JAS. H. LITTLE, Committee from Erosophic Society; and Messrs. CHAPPELL CORY, CHAS. R. MCCALL, Committee from Philomathic Society, Tuscaloosa, Ala.





*Gentlemen of the Erosophic and Philomathic Societies :*

During the reign of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, the wisest man that ever sat upon the throne of the Imperial Cæsars, an insurrection was fomented by Avidius Cassius, a descendant of the conspirator against the great Dictator. Although he was the commander-in-chief of the Oriental army stationed at Antioch, he was narrow-minded, fanatical, visionary, cruel and rigid in his discipline. He was morose, and devoid of sympathy with the aims, and tastes, and pleasures of the world. Consequently, he resolved that the soldiers subject to his authority should not enjoy the luxuries and delights that appeared on the thoroughfares, and haunted the groves, and lurked near the temples of "Daphne by Orontes," which was proverbial for all the allurements that could captivate the senses. For there, amid numberless kinds and forms of voluptuousness, the fire-eyed daughters of the Sun, with mystical songs and magical rites, wove charms and snares for the fame and souls of men. In the execution of this purpose, the ferocious general decapitated some, and amputated the arms, and hands, and feet of others, in order that the horrible spectacles might deter their comrades from any act of disobedience. He hoped by this conduct to obtain such complete mastery over his legions, that they would follow him without hesitation in the unwise and impracticable enterprise of dethroning the Emperor and re-establishing the Republic of Rome.

His movements were observed by Lucius Verus, the colleague of Antoninus, who wrote to him, saying: "I would you had him closely watched. For he is a great disliker of our doings: he is gathering an enormous treasure, and he makes an open jest of our literary pur-

suits. You, for instance, he calls a philosophizing old woman ; and me, a dissolute buffoon and scamp." And Cassius, himself, afterwards wrote: "Marcus Antoninus is a scholar ; he enacts the philosopher ; he tries conclusions upon the four elements, and upon the nature of the soul ; he discourses learnedly upon the *Honestum* ; and concerning the *Summum Bonum* he is unanswerable. Meanwhile, is he learned in the interests of the state ? Can he argue a point upon the economies of the state ?" In this manner he attempted to justify his rebellion, and to vilify and bring into contempt the great ruler, whose statesmanship was no less remarkable than his philosophy. He failed in his undertaking, but paid the debt his folly owed to Justice.

I have narrated this incident to show that in high places, and among persons in authority, is often found a stupid, irrational prejudice against literature, and philosophy, and scholarship, and men of letters ; and that in all civilizations will be observed individuals hard, narrow, small-knowing, churlish, and self-conceited, who in their murky ignorance are prone and prompt to sneer at and condemn all culture, and every pursuit that liberalizes our nature and lifts humanity into a higher sphere of existence.

This unavowed but absolute hostility to the large cultivation and refinement demanded by advancing civilization ; this condition that has neither a yesterday nor a to-morrow, and which uses to-day merely to gaze into the dust with the expectation of finding a few barley-corns, the thinkers of Germany and England term *Philistinism*. And those who are actuated by this sentiment ; who wallow in the "gross mud-honey of the town" ; who are averse from every literary and æsthetic pursuit ; and who are willingly inaccessible to all ideas uncon-

nected with the bread and butter sciences, are properly named Philistines. And, verily, the thorough-paced Philistine deserves your commiseration. For him, the world is toil, and vexation, and vanity, and dreariness. For him, neither the flowers bloom, nor birds sing, nor fountains glisten. His life differs from the gray cloud that coils and dies upon the hills, only in this, that no fold of it is ever touched by the sunbeams. He belongs to a large and widely-scattered tribe, which drifts together in some places in formidable numbers. But as Tuscaloosa is not Gath; and as I do not stand in the headquarters of Goliath, I purpose to speak of LITERATURE, AND ITS INFLUENCE UPON THE CHARACTER OF A PEOPLE. I do so the more willingly, because among us scholarship is not fully appreciated; the character of literary men is misunderstood; and their usefulness and power are greatly misapprehended and underrated.

The Philistinism to which I have referred, is not confined to the wholly uneducated portion of our countrymen. It is perceived among the indolent, the thoughtless, and, shall I say, illiterate men who are engaged in the professions, as well as in other classes that pretend to be intelligent. Having no ambition, or despairing of excellence in the higher departments of knowledge and culture, they jeer at, or damn with faint praise, those members of the community whose tastes and talents, and the fortunate accidents of whose lives, have enabled them to obtain a thorough education; and whose attainments are, in some degree, commensurate with their opportunities. These sneerers conduct themselves as if the knowledge of any truth or principle outside of their peculiar trade, or business, or profession, were despicable: they act as if the facts and ideas gathered from any province of intellect, and the activity of the brain in-

duced by familiarity with exalted themes of thought, did not bestow large powers, and impart skill and finer tact with which to direct and control the common affairs of society. Such persons sometimes talk as if they were ignorant that the civilization we enjoy; the blessings of good government; the domination of law; the suppression of wrong; the supremacy of justice; the reverence for Religion and her ministers; and even the material comforts derived from mechanical inventions and contrivances, were the results of thought;—as if they did not know that these are the fruits of the recorded labors of the wisest men in all the fields of Literature.

This indifference to cultivation does not arise altogether from deficiency of talents, or from the want of those qualities which perceive and appreciate its importance and beauty. It may be attributed to the circumstances which surround us, and which in some measure control our actions. Here, the chase, unparalleled in its energy, for the means of livelihood, seems to prevent the pursuit of letters and arts that adorn and glorify communities. But this submission to the pressure of the external world, and ready obedience to present necessities, are not peculiar to us. For history teaches that the early years of every nation are occupied by war, or by efforts to supply the simplest wants: but in process of time agriculture employs its industry; commerce attracts its attention and stimulates its avarice; and finally, Art, Science and Literature commemorate the achievements of its arms, mollify the exercise of its authority, and embellish the acquisitions of its enterprise. But this general law of development has never operated with its full force upon the people of the United States. Their ancestors were ignorant neither of laws,



nor of policy, nor of literature; nor were they deficient in the refinement of their era. The difficulties encountered and hardships endured by the first immigrants were such as attend all pioneers. These obstacles, which necessarily retarded the growth of literature and diminished somewhat the love of learning, have been removed. And in the older States, the increase of population; the division of labor; the amassment of riches; the frequent intercourse and intimate connection with Europe, have supplied the educational deficiency observable in the early days of the Republic, and still noticeable in the younger members of the Union.

Although these impediments have disappeared from many of the Southern States, they have not attained the rank to which the virtues, the endowments and industry of their citizens entitle them. Full of life and energy, they delight in action more than in contemplation. Impatient of restraint, and ambitious of excellence, they are too eager to seize the success that crowns the passing hour, to wait for the gradual unfolding of their powers, which would achieve more splendid triumphs and obtain more magnificent trophies. Everywhere, the effects of haste, of passion, of excitement, are visible. These impress themselves upon many of their undertakings. Lord Burleigh's favorite maxim, "Stay a little that we may make an end the sooner," they utterly ignore, and do everything hurriedly to-day, with the promise of doing it much better to-morrow. Hence, it is not surprising that literary studies, whose rewards come so slowly, if they come at all in proportion to the labor bestowed, should be but little patronized by them; or that such students and authors should not be rightly esteemed.

In their eagerness to do, they overlook or disregard

the fact that correct action naturally proceeds from correct thought; and that this is the product of the full development and education of all the abilities that distinguish the race. Indeed, the practical man of the most signal success in any vocation always possesses the most accurate powers of reason, and all the knowledge which can be brought to shed its light and blessings upon what enlists his feelings, or employs his intellect. When the philosopher, Thales, was taunted with the inutility of his philosophy, as some are reproached now for their bookishness and devotion to literature, he resolved to apply himself to trade, and soon became the wealthiest citizen of Miletus. The knowledge of the laws of commerce, and the mental power acquired by his literary and philosophical pursuits, were available in his new occupation. These brought him boundless prosperity. Nor was this result wonderful. His success was in accordance with the law that subordinates all things to mind.

Whether this power be inherent in the brain, or is the result of the whole constitution of man, or is, like electricity, a free, grand force of Nature, which manifests itself through human organs as its fittest apparatus, it is certain that its laws and operations have long been interesting topics of discussion. Its exhibitions are greatly affected by race, and are seriously modified by external conditions. The topography of a country: its mountains; its plains and water-courses; the fertility of its soil; the abundance and variety of its vegetable productions; its inaccessibility, or patency to intercourse with foreign nations; the neighborhood of the sun; the proximity of the sea, all have a positive influence upon the industry and industrialisms, the character and civilization of the people. A similarity of locality has been

attended by a similarity of results. In the early ages of the world, seclusion appears to have conduced to the moral, religious, and intellectual advancement, both of the individual and the community. It is immaterial whether this isolation was the effect of natural or artificial causes. The Chinese, by the construction of a wall, occluded themselves from mankind, and produced a civilization remarkable for its ethical code, its religious system, and a polity which, says Voltaire, made "the wisest empire in the universe." In America, by the shores of Titicaca, a sealed lake, the Peruvians, governed by the Incas, attained their highest civilization. It was in such a secluded basin in Mexico that the Aztecs achieved a refinement that surpassed all other nations on this continent. But notwithstanding the variety of circumstances favorable or unfavorable to mental phenomena, all intellect is one in its essence. The divers civilizations that have existed, and which still exist, are its expressions as affected by the facts I have mentioned. These become a power that exerts an immeasurable influence on its subsequent growth.—Nothing magnifies and activates intellect so much as thought. Consequently, Literature, which is a continent of ideas, truths and principles that move in the higher latitudes of being, or dwell habitually on the heights of the soul, is its chief auxiliary. For its structure is such that only these can stimulate and influence its action. Sensations, passions, or emotions, are powerless to affect human conduct until they have been analyzed and considered in their nature and tendencies. This operation is performed in every voluntary movement, but often so rapidly as to escape consciousness. But the process by which externalities become ideas, and transient events fix themselves in the opinions of philosophy, in the business of life, or in the institutions



of a country, cannot be too carefully scrutinized. To do this effectually, the diligent and critical study of the writings of great authors is absolutely necessary. Some of them treat of the laws of intellect, and the conditions of their operation. They teach the method according to which the perceptions of the senses are transmuted into ideas; and often contain suggestions as to the mode in which the faculties may be exerted so as to yield the largest benefits. They impart not only information, but also bestow positive power.

As Literature includes within its ample limits such productions, no unfounded suspicion that its votaries are visionaries; no taunts upon the employment of scholars, and their apparent idleness; no gibes upon the pedantry or bookishness of the educated; no detraction from the merit of literary men, can justify its neglect. It is true, however, as Jeremy Taylor has well remarked: "Too many scholars have lived upon air and empty notions for many ages past, and troubled themselves with tying and untying knots, like hypochondriacs in a fit of melancholy, thinking of nothing, and troubling themselves with nothing, and falling out about nothing, and being very wise and very learned in things that are not, and work not, and were never planted in Paradise by the finger of God." By literature, I do not mean the works of such persons, or the balderdash of some popular periodicals; or the ephemeral performances of those writers whose absurd social theories stir the passions and perplex the judgment of the multitude. Under such tuition, the barbarians of the nineteenth century become as ferocious as the barbarians of former ages. The Communists of Paris, led by Rochfort, Blanqui and Raoul Rigault, were as cruel, as blood-thirsty, and as terrible as the Huns of Attila, or the Vandals of Genseric.

But by literature, I mean the productions of the grand old masters of our own language, and of other tongues; the labors of those immortal geniuses of all ages, who, by virtue of their performances, are citizens of all countries, and the contemporaries of every generation: by it, I mean such books as Milton so admirably describes, in his *Areopagitica*, as “containing the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life”; books that record the reflections and experience of men whose exploits and opinions have affected the destiny of the world; books that contain exalted principles, from whose summits can be viewed the Future, with its tremendous forces still in reserve, stretching out like a landscape before you; books that, replete with truth, teach the art of life, and, full of noble examples of wisdom, of virtue, of courage, of fortitude, of patriotism, and Christian charity, invigorate the intellect and improve the character. In such volumes are thoughts, whence have originated systems of philosophy and new sciences; thoughts which have been the germs of religious creeds, and the causes of civil revolutions; thoughts that, sown broadcast over the earth, like dragon’s teeth have sprung up armed men.

Such literature is the perfect psychological history of Humanity. It is the expression of passion and thought in all conceivable conditions, and in every stage of development. Indeed, it performs the three-fold function of recording the advancement of society; of being evidence of the fact, and of promoting its further progress. It quickens the intellect, and increases its actual power. It not only imparts knowledge, but, arousing the energies of the mind, causes it to excogitate ideas, which become institutions about which new policies are sug-

gested and laws enacted, that, in turn, produce other ideas, and found still newer establishments. Literary culture enhances the prosperity of a people. It gives rise to new inventions and discoveries. It enables men to overcome the physical elements, and make them the vassals of their will and the instruments of their success. It creates tastes that demand gratification, and straightway a new department of labor is opened, which, affording employment to many, contributes to the welfare of all. And in a refined society, Literature, itself, becomes a vocation, which engages the attention of gifted and aspiring men, and renders them useful to their country. The kingdom of Denmark, knowing the value and importance of such characters, for many years has granted a stipend to its artists and scholars, to enable them to travel in foreign lands and perfect themselves in all the learning and accomplishments of the times. It recognizes the truth, that those ancient nations that did not honor intellect, but despised all mental pursuits, are the anonymous part of mankind. They are remembered by no wise system of morals, politics, or religion; by no creations of art; by no discoveries in science; by no ingenious inventions; by no enduring monument of useful or well-directed industry. They ignored the Sun, and labored and moved by the light of the stars. They were born only that they might be able to die.

But the cultivation of Literature has also a conservative power. It perpetuates the origin and achievements of a people. It repeats the legends of their ancestors, and incites them to the imitation of applauded acts and virtues. It tells the source and mutations of their religious creeds and dogmas of philosophy. It sings in musical numbers the triumphs of faith and the deeds of valor. It consecrates, by its eloquence, the memory of

those who died on the scaffold, or in the battle's van in the discharge of duty, or in vindication of truth, and inspires a reverence for the past and an aversion from change.\* The immutability of the Jews may be ascribed to the Talmud. It has been the bond of their union; the fount of their morality; the source of their enlightenment, and their shining glory. The Iliad of Homer preserved the nationality of the Greeks long after the jarring interests of the states, and the rivalries of ambitious leaders, had destroyed the sympathies which first attracted and bound them together. But this conservatism is by no means stagnation. It is not at all antagonistic to rational advancement. The persons, or people, addicted to literature, follow the example of time itself, which, Lord Bacon says, "indeed innovateth greatly, but by degrees scarce to be perceived." They do not subvert approved institutions for slight causes. No temporary inconvenience, arising from mal-administration of the government, can induce them to conspire for its overthrow. They follow the convictions of reason, and are submissive to the dictation of ideas. When a cluster of thoughts, or principles, appears in the firmament of mind, like a new constellation in the heavens, and they yield it their homage, none are more progressive, and, if necessary, more revolutionary, in their conduct. Indeed, while insurrections, proceeding from passion or transient discontent, are often led by sciolists or illiterate persons, such as Spartacus, of Rome, Wat Tyler, of England, Massaniello, of Naples, Raoul Rigault, the Communist, of Paris, or Ali Suavi, recently in Constantinople; great revolutions, which overthrow old governments, permanently establish new ones, and change the course of history, are always begun, or conducted, by learned and accomplished men, in accordance with some beneficent principle.



The vigor imparted by Literature gives the aims of life a higher elevation, and promotes morality. The productions of some authors were considered by Melancthon to be scarcely inferior in usefulness and authority to the Scriptures. In commenting on the heresies of his age, he uses these memorable words: "Wherefore, our decision is this: that those precepts which learned men have committed to writing, transcribing them from the common reason and common feeling of human nature, are to be accounted as not less divine than those contained in the table given to Moses; and that it could not be the intention of our Maker to supersede, by a law graven on stone, that which is written with his own finger upon the table of the heart." Few, perhaps, will agree with the great reformer in his estimate of Literature, but none will deny that it mollifies manners, broadens the sympathies, and makes the sad vicissitudes of fortune more tolerable. Under its benign sway, the passions are subdued; vice diminishes; the "bandit propensities skulk away to their dens," and crimes are less frequent. These effects are so universally recognized, that there are laws in Iceland and China which require the parents of a youthful criminal to be sought, and if, upon inquiry, it is ascertained that they neglected the education of their child, the offender is discharged, and they suffer the penalty of the offence. The ameliorating influences of Literature upon a country make the prizes of society of more difficult acquisition. The depraved and ignorant are almost powerless; while those who have integrity, fidelity to principle, and talents improved by culture, have authority and control over public opinion equal to their merits; and opinion governs the world.

The development of mind; the support of virtue;

obedience to law, and reverence for religion, contribute largely to social prosperity. These preserve the domestic tranquillity of the State, and afford protection against its foreign foes. For it is remarkable that, in war, all other things being equal, the nation which is endowed with the largest intellectual gifts : or has the highest civilization ; or moves in accordance with the noblest principle of action, or some freshly recognized truth that forms the basis of a new era, is the most successful. It is not denied that barbarians have over-run enlightened countries, but this has happened only when their civilization was effete. Under such a condition, they may have succumbed to savage hordes enthusiastically devoted to some idea, whose broad significance they may not have comprehended. But, even in such a calamity, the nation thoroughly enlightened is not annihilated. The opinions of its sages, the writings of its men of genius, and the traditions of its policy, will still survive. Its institutions, even in ruin, will cast long shadows over the rolling centuries ; and other countries and distant ages will profit by the instruction of its philosophers. The scholar of to-day reads with delight the history of Thucydides, the dramas of Æschylus, the poems of Homer, and the songs of Anacreon. The doctrines of Plato and Aristotle have dominion and rule an empire more glorious than Athens did, when she was the brilliant mistress of a thousand tributaries, and at once, the envy and the admiration of the world.

Literature has been termed the "school-mistress of nations," and, like that admirable character, it preserves good order and peace among its pupils. It teaches a generous philanthropy. It shows that, whatever may be the difference of intellectual development among different peoples, their faculties are the same, and vary

only in degree; that Humanity, comprising such dissimilar elements, is a unit, and exhibits, under like conditions, the same traits, the same heroism, the same virtues, and narrates almost the same legends. It recounts in every part of the globe the loves of the gods; the exploits of heroes; the vigilance of beatified spirits over mortals; the conflict of good and evil; the duel of Ormuzd and Ahriman. In Attica, it says that, the divine Plato was the offspring of a beautiful vision; in England, that the father of Merlin, the magician, was a melodious voice, sometimes heard in the atmosphere; and in Mexico, that Huitzilopotchli, the Aztec God of War, was indebted for his existence to a gorgeous bunch of feathers that floated in the air. It tells, by the flickering camp-fire on the out-stretched prairies, that Hiawatha was descended from the West wind. In India, it relates that Sitva, one of the Hindoo trinity, was begotten by a ray of light, and was born of the virgin Maia. In Greece, it recites that Achilles, plunged into the river Styx, became impenetrable to weapons, except in the heel; in Germany, Woden, bathed in dragon's blood, was invulnerable, save on the spot where a leaf had accidentally fallen; among the American Indians, Kwasind, renowned for strength, was reputed mortal only on the crown of his head, and was vulnerable solely by a cone of the pine; and in Scandinavia, that nothing but a twig of the misletoe could have slain one of its deities. Indra among the Hindoos, and Thamar among the Teutons, wear beards of fire, and both have an unquenchable thirst for the waters of Heaven.

But not alone is the identity of faculties shown by similarity of traditions. The dissimilar forms of worship, and variety of customs, and of laws, are only different moods of the same individual. They are but the tempo-



rary manifestations of endowments, striving for perfect development and seeking a higher destiny. And ever, side by side, along with all these phases of thought and human passion, moves a procession of ideas, and sympathies, and aspirations, not embodied in the state, or faith, or achievements. These make literature, interpret that portion of humanity, and determine its value to the world. This general resemblance of capabilities indicates the interdependence of all literature, and the importance of its extensive cultivation for the full comprehension of any part of it. For, all events are connected in logical order, and not the change of the slightest circumstance; not the utterance of an opinion, or the suppression of a theory other than has been spoken or silenced; not the birth of a man distinguished in any manner whatever; or his death earlier, or later, or otherwise than it occurred, but what would have altered in some particular the condition of the race. A grain of sand, says Godwin, the profound thinker, less or more in the creation of the earth, would have changed the entire history of the world. And Pascal thought that if Cleopatra's nose had been a little shorter, the fate of mankind would have been different. This intimate connection of all occurrences and all literature explains the influence of Ancient on Modern times, and the authority of the thinkers of the past over the opinions of the present. It is, therefore, of the greatest concernment, "in the church and commonwealth, to have a vigilant eye how books demean themselves, as well as men." They have an existence of their own, and often produce effects not anticipated by their authors, not only in the land, and at the time of their publication, but in foreign countries, and in remote generations. The strange, weird mysticism and dreamy philosophy of India repeat themselves in Greece. In the early

churches, the doctrines of Plato blended with the religion of Christ. And ages afterwards the dogmas of Aristotle, disseminated through Europe by Avicenna, Averrhoes, and other Arabian philosophers, gave rise to many perplexing, "vermiculate questions," and were the prime cause of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. But if the teachings of the master of Alexander the Great conduced to that event, to the writings of Nicholas Machiavelli must be imputed many of the cruelties and persecutions consequent to it. So damnable were considered many of the sentiments promulgated by him, so general was their acceptance, and so wide-spread their practice, that the English called the Devil "Old Nick," in honor of his name. His notorious book, entitled the "Prince," mightily influenced the life of Catharine de Medicis, and instigated the massacre of St. Bartholomew.

A single work, on account of the novelty of its ideas; or its wisdom; or the lucid exposition of principles; or its accordance with the enlightenment of the period; or its embodiment of passion; or popular prejudice, has often been attended with extraordinary consequences. The publication of Don Quixote, it is believed, overthrew the institution of chivalry in Spain. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" is known to have strengthened the party of Abolitionists in the United States, and to have intensified the sectional antipathy which culminated in war. From "Oceana," a political novel, written by Harrington, we derive the system of ballot employed by our citizens in every election. Lessing's *Minna Von Barnheim*, is said to have made peace between Prussia and Saxony, at the end of the Seven Years' War. And *Nathan, the Wise*, a drama by the same author, caused a much needed reform, and beneficial change in the social status and estimation of the Jews in Germany.

Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations" has materially moulded the policy of Europe. Speaking of it, Buckle has said its publication "contributed more towards the happiness of man, than has been effected by the united abilities of all the statesmen and legislators of whom history has preserved an authentic account." Dean Swift's predictions of Isaac Bickerstaff quickened the activity of a secret tribunal in Portugal, and established periodical literature. His Drapier letters set Ireland on fire, cancelled the patent of King William, inspired or kept breathing the spirit which, in a later day, the eloquence of Grattan evoked to national life. The pretended confessions of Elliston suppressed street robberies in the city of London for forty years. Another of his pamphlets caused the erection of fifty churches. The introduction of the speeches and essays of Burke, made an epoch in the history of Germany. The narrow, the selfish, the mean theory of human nature taught by Hobbes, is responsible for the gross immoralities that disgraced the profligate court and reign of Charles the Second. The philosophy of Locke, adopted and extended by the Encyclopædists, occasioned the French Revolution of 1789.

I have mentioned only a few authors, the consequences of whose works are plainly visible; yet how many unknown and lost productions have aided the advancement of mankind? How many volumes have been composed, of which nothing remains except some homely maxim, daily repeated by men who never suspect its origin? May not the proverbs uttered so glibly by laughing childhood and thoughtful age, now serving as a warning to the young, and now, as a consolation to the old, be the remnant of a forgotten civilization? Or the literary fragments of some splendid genius that lived, and

thought, and suffered, long, long ago, when the world was new, and when the faculties had walked so recently in the train of God, that having caught the brightness of his presence, they still retained its rays?

In speaking of the influence of letters upon character, songs cannot be omitted. They are the literature of the feelings and sentiment. "Indeed," says Tyndall, "the intellectual action of a complete man is consciously or unconsciously sustained by an undercurrent of emotions." If this be true, songs are of great importance. They often express noble sentiments, or recall some heart-stirring tradition, or commemorate all that valor has dared or fortitude endured. Sometimes they breathe the tenderness of mournful memories, and sometimes the ferocity of hatred, blind as enormous night, and reckless as fire. Under their inspiration, piety glows more ardently, and patriotism often renews its drooping energies. It was, therefore, not unwise, but cruel, in King Edward to massacre the bards of Wales, in order that he might conquer that unhappy country. When the Messenians had nearly subdued the Spartans, the War Elegy of Tyrtæus reanimated their courage and aroused them to efforts which saved their capital. A song of Euripides so affected the Syracusans that they struck the chains from the limbs of the Athenians, captured by them, in the ill-advised expedition of Alcibiades against their country. Not only in war, but in civil revolutions; in ecclesiastical reformations; in all great movements where principle and sentiment combine, songs exert an absolute sway over the passions. Hence, the hymns of Hans Sach, the German shoemaker, contributed as much to the triumph of the Reformation as the Elector of Saxony. The "*Ein feste Burg*," Luther's celebrated psalm, the Marseillaise of the Sixteenth Cen-



ture, conduced as much to his success as the eloquence of his discourses, whose words are said to have been half battles. The silly ballad of Lilli Bulero, the verses of which were everywhere recited, inflamed the discontent of the people, that terminated in the English Revolution of 1688. The Marseilles Hymn, the recovered echo of Thermopylæ, interpreted and set to music by the gallant young officer, Rouget de Lisle, inspiring enthusiasm for the liberty of France, incited her children to exploits of heroism, and to acts of self-sacrifice not easily paralleled in the annals of time. And in the Crimea, on one of the bloodiest fields recorded in history, far above the booming of cannon and clangor of arms; far above the battle-cry and rushing charge of cavalry; far above the furious shock and uproar of contending armies, rang out loudly and clearly the words of Annie Laurie, sung by thousands and thousands of stern warriors. It recalled to the memory of each, the home of his childhood, and the idols of his heart in the far distant Island, and nerving his arm to a bolder stroke for England and St. George, urged to a fuller, swifter flow the bloody tide of battle. Such are the effects of even the less thoughtful portions of literature upon states, religion, passions and character.

Inasmuch as Literature has such influence upon mind; as it possesses so much power on government, teaching it wise policy and conserving institutions; as it stimulates industry and promotes morality and public virtue; as it is a noble vocation and glorifies a state; as the philosophies are so intimately connected that one cannot be understood without knowledge of all, and their union causes enlightenment as the interwoven beams of the sun make the day; and as songs, the bright-robed and jubilant children of fancy, rule the heart, it behooves all good

citizens, for the sake of the community in which they live, and for the glory of the commonwealth, to encourage and promote, by all possible means, the cultivation and diffusion of letters.

In this course we would imitate the example of the wisest people of the world. In China, whose policy until recently has been as immutable as the laws of Nature, scholarship is the road which leads to the most honorable posts of the empire. The ablest productions of its authors in poetry, in ethics and sciences, its people very appropriately call "Kings." The writings of Laotse are so venerated that although they may be read by all Chinese, a sect known as the "Honorers of Reason" isolate themselves from civil affairs and make the study of them their sole occupation. Among the Hindoos, whose literature is again exciting much interest, the Vedas, abounding in prayers and moral precepts, are held too sacred to be read by any but the Brahmins, and the perusal of them by another caste is punished with death. The successful author of a history, a tragedy or a panegyric, recited at the public games of Greece was crowned with laurel or ivy; and upon his return, the city of his residence poured forth its population to welcome him who had brought to it, immortality. So esteemed are philosophy and poetry among the Arabs, that nearly all of the early Caliphs are as renowned for their learning and oratory as for their strategy and skill in public affairs. Their seven illustrious poems, believed to be inspired, are printed in letters of gold and suspended in the holy Kaaba.

The prizes that Christendom offers to scholarship are, questionless, as numerous and as brilliant as those which induced the most gifted men of other races and other systems of civilization, to engage in the pursuit of

learning. Nor can it be denied that the present circumstances are as propitious to such labors as any that have existed. The triumph of the principle which aggrandizes the power of society, and diminishes that of the individual, has not since the Reformation been so assured as now. It is perceptible in politics, in religion, and in science; and creates a condition most favorable to the growth and gratification of literary tastes and abilities.

In the opportunities that environ us, I behold the means by which Southern authorship can reach as high a position as that attained by American enterprise. We have no distinctly marked literature. With few exceptions, American authors imitate the Europeans, not only in style, but in sentiment. They advocate the reform of abuses not known to us, and satirize vices which have not, until recently, appeared in our society. They ignore the fact that productions of taste, written to please the subjects of monarchies, aristocracies, and absolute despotisms, however exquisite may be the composition, can elicit no hearty sympathy from the citizens of a Republic. To do this, the ideas expressed in fiction, in poetry, in songs and eloquence, must resemble closely those incorporated in their political, moral and religious institutions, and in their social and industrial habits and employments. In order that books should exert their full power upon a people, they should appear to be the natural products of the country. The forest should cast its shadows upon their pages; through them should glide the refreshing influences of its streams; on them should spread out the beauty of its plains; and upon them should rest the grandeur and gloom of its highlands and mountains. They should throb with its passions; they should shine with all phases of character, as the diamond sparkles with its many facets; they



should be phonographs of the multitudinous voices of the market-place; they should be blackened with the smoke of its battles, and be stained by the blood of its people. For, notwithstanding all literature is linked together, that is of the most value which expresses the peculiarities of its birth-place and age. Because Fielding portrayed English habits and character; because Burns sang with faultless melody the traits of his countrymen and the scenery of Scotland; because our own Cooper, with matchless accuracy, has described American landscape and Indian qualities, each of them has a renown not altogether dependent upon his genius. The idiosyncracies of our people may not have appeared in our writers, because they are not yet sufficiently defined. They will become objective when they permeate every form of life. Time alone can effect this result.

It may devolve upon some of you, Young Gentlemen, to write their history; or to embody them in fiction or in poetry; or to discuss them in a philosophical treatise, which the world will not willingly let die. For such a task, no preparation can be superior to the earnest and exhaustive study of literature. Indeed, I can commend no wiser course for your adoption, let your vocations be what they may. If you should pursue the law as a profession, it will conduce to your brilliancy as advocates; if you should practise medicine, it will increase and adorn your success; if you should devote yourselves to the ministry, it will enlarge your power to teach divine truths; if you should engage in agriculture, or trade, or mechanical employments, you will derive from it, incalculable benefits.

I hope that, as in the royal navy, with every cable, and rope, and cord, used about the ship, is intertwined a single, tiny, scarlet thread, which proclaims to the world

that the vessel belongs to the Queen of England, so through all your lives and occupations will run the scholarship acquired here, and love of letters, that show you belong to the intellectual class, which forms the opinions and makes and directs the destiny of a country. This will be the reward of diligent study ; of careful training of the faculties ; of self-denial ; of scorning delights, and living laborious days.

The fate of the youth of the Swedish legend may teach a lesson of perseverance and discipline ; of labor and patience. Without knowing the purpose of the requirement, he submitted to the command of an apparently inferior being, to bring for the period of one year, day by day, a single twig from the garden, to bind upon each a thread, and to heap them together. When his task was completed, the twigs burst into flame, and from it issued a maiden radiant with beauty, and the queen of a powerful kingdom. So, Young Gentlemen, week after week, month following month, and year succeeding year, you may gather some fact from nature ; or learn some event of history ; or acquire some principle of science ; or may trace a truth to unknown consequences ; or discover a force or law that has been hitherto concealed ; or perceive some shade of thought, or passion not before recognized. And the grand result of these careful labors will be a mind crowned with power, owning riches greater than the wealth of the Indian hills, or the treasures of the sea, and ruling over the fairest, loveliest, noblest realm in the Universe—the realm of Literature. Within its broad domain will be found the germs of all wisdom, and influence, and earthly glory, but not a single, solitary tabernacle, tent or sign of the Philistines.







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